

Conference Abstract

History of the Yale Peabody Museum Invertebrate Paleontology Collection

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Abstract

While the Yale Peabody Museum itself did not exist as an entity until 1866, the collections that are its core have been on campus much longer. Yale College had a cabinet of natural wonders including zoological oddities (a taxidermied two-headed calf), anthropological material (wooden shoes from France and China), and other interesting items (including a bottle of water from the Ganges River) (Narendra 1979) dating back to the American Revolution and the late 1700s. This “Cabinet of Yale College” had been housed in multiple places around campus prior to the construction of the Peabody Museum. Some of the earliest collections came from exchanges between Benjamin Silliman (Anonymous 2024b) and Gideon Mantell (Anonymous 2024c), two well-known scientists of the early 1800s. It was not until 1876, when the first Peabody Museum building opened, that the museum had its own space Suppl. material 1. The appointment of paleontologist Charles Beecher (Anonymous 2024a) in 1888 gave the invertebrate paleontology collection its first dedicated staff member. Under Beecher the collections continued to grow with multiple accessions from Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. By the late 1860s, fossils from the American West were being shipped back to Yale by train. Dinosaurs described by O. C. Marsh (Anonymous 2024d) are the most well-known (particularly *Brontosaurus*, *Triceratops*, and *Stegosaurus*), but the invertebrate paleontology division received extensive collections of Western Interior Seaway specimens from the central portion of the United States. Charles Schuchert took over the division in 1904, bringing with him an extensive collection of brachiopods, which he continued to expand over his lifetime. Graduate student dissertation collections

significantly added to the growth of the museum's holdings throughout the twentieth century. Significant additions in the last quarter century include the Samuel J. Ciurca (Anonymous 2024e) eurypterid collection, an Early Ordovician Fezouata Formation Lagerstätte collection, the CLIMAP (Climate: Long range Investigation, Mapping, And Prediction (Anonymous 2024f) collection of Foraminifera slides and vials, and an incredibly diverse collection of Green River Formation insects (all of the catalogued specimens in these collections can be found on our [search portal](#). Many fossils are on display in the newly renovated Yale Peabody Museum, which reopened in April of 2024 (Suppl. material 1).

Keywords

Charles Schuchert, Charles Beecher, Yale University

Presenting author

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Conflicts of interest

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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Supplementary material

Suppl. material 1: A History of the Invertebrate Paleontology Collections at Yale Peabody Museum - poster [doi](#)

Authors: Jessica Utrup

Data type: poster

Brief description: This is the poster that goes along with this abstract.

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